

382. To the Skylark

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

ETHEREAL minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

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To the last point of vision, and beyond
Mount, daring warbler!—that love-prompted strain
—'Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond—
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain:
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege! to sing
All independent of the leafy Spring.

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Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine,
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam—
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.

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To the Skylark by William Wordsworth

Introduction: William Wordsworth composed *To The Skylark* in 1825. It was first published in 1827. It was written five years after the composition of Shelley's *To a Skylark*. Wordsworth had read and highly admired Shelley's poem as an exquisite poem. He had been influenced by Shelley's poem *To a Skylark*.

Wordsworth's *To the Skylark* is classed as a poem of his imagination. It is a characteristic product of his genius. The poem deals with the poet's description of the skylark's habits with all the accuracy of a patient observer of Nature. He humanizes the conception of the bird. The poem is enriched with a rich human interest. In the bird, the poet finds a symbol of the truly wise men of the world. The poem contains a high moral for people that the wise should necessarily be faithful equally to both their high thoughts and daily, ordinary duties and this constitutes the definition of the wise. Thus, the poet idealises the instincts of the Skylark and in its behaviour is reflected the character of the wise in the society.

Central Idea of the Poem: The Skylark is a singing bird ;it soars and sings in the air. It never forgets its nest on the earth. While mounting upwards, it anxiously watches its nest. Whenever it wishes, it flies down upon the earth to its nest, stopping the flapping motion of its wings and ceasing to sing. It soars so high that it becomes invisible to the eyes. But its love for its mate and offspring prompts it to continue singing, and thereby it fills the plain with joyous music. Its song is unforced and spontaneous. It seems to be independent of the inspiration which other birds draw from spring and the green leaves that come with spring. It should not grudge the nightingale which sings songs in some wood at night. The Skylark's song is superior to that of the nightingale. The Skylark is hidden from our gaze as it is lost in the dazzling light of the sun, but the nightingale is hidden in the darkness of the forest. The Skylark is a creature that has the qualities and characteristics in common with truly wise men. It is a symbol of the wise who have reconciled the claims of God and worthy duties.

Analysis of the poem :

Lines 1-6: The Skylark sings in the air. It is a lone traveller up into the sky. It doesn't look down upon the earth which is full of troubles and anxieties. It may soar but its eyes and heart remain fixed on its nest on the ground. Whenever it wishes, it stops the motion of its fluttering wings and can come down into its nest. When it does this, it ceases to sing.

Lines 7-12: The Skylark flies up so high that it becomes invisible to the eyes. But still, its song is inspired by its love for its young ones that are there in the nest below on the earth. The song binds it to its beloved ones in a permanent bond of love, which never fails. The song, though meant for its own offspring, pleases equally men who are on the earth. It seems that the song is meant for men on the earth. The bird may be proud of one great privilege. It always sings independent of the spring-time on earth.

Lines 13-18: The poet dwells upon the superior singing of the Skylark as compared with the singing of the nightingale. The nightingale sings in a shade-giving wood, while the Skylark passes its time in a place hidden from observation, from where it deluges the earth with a lavish burst of song. The poet looks upon the Skylark as a symbol of the wisdom of those human beings who have reconciled the claims of God and worldly duties. The song of the Skylark is superior to that of the nightingale.